

2 April 1981

Captain Robert L. Bovey
Military Assistant
Office of the Secretary of
Defense
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Captain Bovey:

Thank you for the lesson(s) in your article on intelligence analysis that recently appeared in the American Intelligence Journal. A general benefit would be derived for sure if the government's corps of intelligence analysts spent some time with it.

It also would be good to get your views concerning what you call the "dissemination phase." I think you are quite right that perceptive analysis is worthless unless it be made available to policy officials in "intelligible and persuasive" form. However, the real issue in this context may not be, as you suggest, "packaging the product for dissemination."

I call your attention to a recent article by Professor Ransom which is of interest in this connection. I've attached a copy of my views concerning what Ransom has to say. I'd be interested in your reactions--may be a good excuse to get together soon, inter alia, to trade accounts of recent experiences pertaining to this issue that you have chosen to call "a moral obligation to provide the policymaker with our judgment."

Sincerely yours,



STAT

Enclosure:
As Stated

Comments on Recent Ransom Article

I agree with H. H. Ransom ("Being Intelligent About Secret Intelligence Agencies," Contra, October 1980) that there is a need to better define the functions of intelligence en route to deriving a theory of intelligence. And it probably is true that an acceptable theory would permit improved evaluation of performance including whether or not policymakers have been properly forewarned.

Before greater progress can be made toward this goal, however, a fundamental consideration is whether or not the effort would be worth it. It would seem not to be if Mr. Ransom's "partly intuitive" hypotheses cannot be disproved at the outset, i.e., that a) intelligence systems tend to report what they think the political leadership wants to hear, and b) leaders often take action without regard to intelligence reports. As Mr. Ransom rightly points out, if these hypotheses represent reality then intelligence makes little difference in policy formulation. The benefits from serious study of the process therefore would be problematical.

My view is that both hypotheses, and especially the first, can be tested and would be disproven with an abundance of examples and other evidence. The hypotheses embody more fancy than fact. But a dispassionate assessment of the track record is warranted and is of enormous importance. It should be completed and presented in a satisfactory way to determine what has been the rule and the exception.

So onward with the development of a theory of intelligence . . . with an additional observation: the last purely intelligence-related step in the intelligence process would seem to be the receipt by the decisionmakers of evaluated information--descriptive, explanatory, or predictive. Conceptually, the use of intelligence in the policy decision process is believed by many intelligence officials and others to be a phenomenon occurring either after the intelligence process has run its course or parallel to it--perhaps both. Its importance in decisionmaking--indeed its "pivotal" role--is palpable. But is it not more or less outside the realm of intelligence theory, not to mention the responsibilities of intelligence authorities?

Finally, the importance should not be discounted of a sagacious senior official who successfully eschews becoming an advocate of specific courses of action, in particular those ultimately resulting in adverse consequences. Not carrying the baggage of such choices seemingly would enhance the perceived impartiality of such an official. And this valuable trait would serve well in connection with the intelligence contribution to attempts that subsequently might be made at setting things right, or at least limiting damage.



STAT